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*CENTENARY VOLUME*



THE ORGANISATION  
*OF OUR*  
SABBATH SCHOOLS



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*Centenary Volume*

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THE ORGANISATION  
OF  
OUR SABBATH-SCHOOLS

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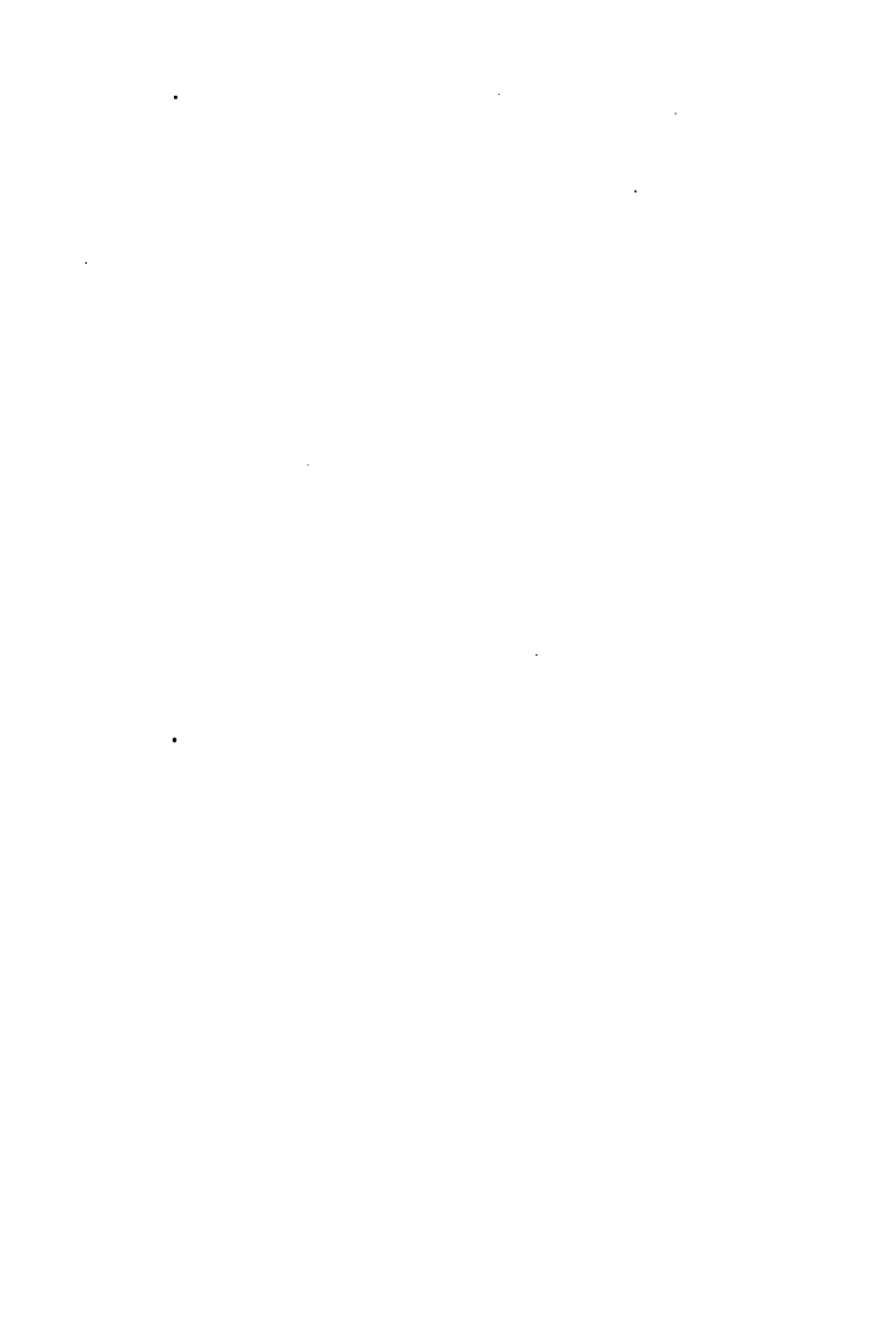
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## P R E F A C E.

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THIS unpretending little Volume is an attempt to put before those who are engaged in Sabbath-school work a remedy for several of the defects of our Sabbath-school system. The plan suggested is simple in the extreme, is easily worked in schools of any size, and costs less than any other plan we know. It was only at the request of a number of friends, who know how the system works, that it has been put in print.

We have to acknowledge our obligations to those who so kindly assisted in procuring information for this work.

D. M.



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# THE ORGANISATION OF OUR SABBATH - SCHOOLS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE PRINCIPLE ON WHICH SABBATH-SCHOOLS ARE FOUNDED.

THE principle on which Sabbath-schools are founded is a very ancient and fundamental principle of our religion. It is contained in the words of our Lord Himself, when welcoming the children whom His disciples would have sent away, in these words—"Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." But it reaches still further back; for is it not also found in the command of Moses to the Israelites, when he enjoined them to instruct their children in regard to the rites used at the feast of the Passover? "And it shall come to pass, *when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service?* that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped" (Exod. xii. 26, 27).

So likewise, in giving the commandments and enjoining obedience to the law, it is written, "These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart : *And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*"

It is abundantly clear from these and other parts of Scripture that our heavenly Father meant the children to be the special care of the faithful ; and though this fact and this principle were ignored for ages among other nations, and only but indifferently attended to among the Jews—except in regard to the ritual of religion—yet it was *there* in all its beauty and all its heavenly loveliness, given to men from God on high to show how much He cared that they who should in due time become the men and women, having the care and direction of affairs in the world, should be early imbued with the spirit of this most holy law. This principle, like many other sublime truths in Scripture, was ignored before Christ came, and before He sent us His Holy Spirit to guide us to all truth : it was there all the while, like a diamond in a field ; but it was only after the lapse of many centuries that this precious stone was observed and brought forth into the light, when it became a recognised principle in Christian Churches that the young should be specially instructed in schools on Sabbath in the great truths of the Bible. The nations had begun to learn by experience that the children were worthy of consideration for the sake of the State ; and they had begun to take care to have them trained so as to bring out their powers, as well mental as bodily, many centuries before this principle of educating the higher part of their being was duly recognised. There was a growing reverence for the life and wellbeing of the child

even in early monastic times ; and many a young life has been saved to the world, and for the world's benefit, by the humanity shown by the monasteries to those unfortunates that from time to time had been laid at their doors, evidently in the hope and belief that there they would be cared for and properly reared. The erection of foundling hospitals at Trèves, Angers, Milan, and elsewhere, as time advanced, shows very clearly that men's minds were moving in this direction. That the Council of Rouen should have decreed that a child laid at the door of a church was to be taken care of by the Church, shows a remarkable advance in the respect in which the life and wellbeing of the young were held.

The general principle of caring for the welfare of children, and the duty of seeing them properly trained in religious knowledge, were gradually developing on all sides ; and as men began to be more enlightened, the idea gained ground the faster, that public bodies were bound to see to this being done. But though instances are not wanting of some of them recording their sense of the propriety of such a step, yet it was generally left to the individual effort of some energetic individuals to carry out in their own way, and almost invariably at their own expense, whatever plans or purposes they might conceive for the religious instruction of the young. It would appear that Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan, established Sabbath-schools in the sixteenth century, in which the children were taught the tenets of the Roman Catholic faith, and the ordinary branches of secular education ; while Abbé Jean Baptiste de la Salle opened a Sabbath-school for the *gamins* of Paris in 1669 in connection with the Romish Church. Though this school existed for six years only, yet it is an evidence of the growing anxiety on the part of pious men, and those who had

the good of children at heart, that they should be instructed in religious knowledge.

#### RISE OF SABBATH-SCHOOLS IN SCOTLAND.

Throughout this country, from an early period of last century, there are instances of individuals who in their own way had endeavoured to form classes for the instruction of children in religious knowledge on Sundays ; and though they may be unknown to fame, yet they have contributed some part, however small, that has gone to help to bring about the grand result of our Sabbath-school system that now so triumphantly flourishes in our land. They may have been no more than as drops of water in the river, their contributions may have been only as the "mite" of the poor widow, yet they have done what they could, and have set agoing a mighty engine for the religious wellbeing of the young of future generations ; and it is a duty to them to acknowledge their help, and to rescue from oblivion any of their names that have been preserved to us.

As early as 1710 we read of a Sunday-school having been found in Berwick, while in 1756 there is mention made of another kept by a Presbyterian minister in his own house for fifty years. The "Rabbi Robertson," famous for Hebrew scholarship, who flourished in Kilmarnock as minister of the Antiburgher Kirk, Clerk's Lane, was in the habit of assembling the youth of his congregation between sermons on Sundays for the purpose of catechising them. This he did from the beginning of his ministry in 1775. In the same town John Russell originated a missionary Sabbath-school in 1798 ; while an evening class was instituted for teaching those strangers lately settled at Kilmarnock, "who laboured under such great disadvantage in the

early part of life that at this very day they cannot read a word of the Scriptures." The teacher attended on Saturdays and Sundays, and received £10 annually, while the school was under the superintendence of the ministers of the place. At Galston, Mrs Scott, the wife of the General, and mother-in-law of the Duke of Portland, erected a school in 1787; and at Ochiltree, as we learn from Mr David Rowan's 'Memorials,' Lady Glencairn supported a Sabbath-school as early as 1792. One name deserves to be remembered in speaking of this work—that is John Brown of Priest-hill, who was martyred by Claverhouse in 1685, for it is recorded of him that he used to gather the children around him on Sabbath evenings for religious instruction. In 1782, we find a Sabbath-school established in the Barony parish of Glasgow; and Dr John Burns testifies that he regularly attended them in the Calton the same year; while there was a Sabbath-school taught by Mr John Clark in Lady Glenorchy's chapel in 1793. Two years later the system made considerable progress under the care and advocacy of Rev. John Campbell. His first school was in the Archers' Hall, which he hired for the purpose, and where he got a man well versed in Scripture to teach. He opened a second Sabbath-school at Loanhead, and seeing the plan succeed so well, he turned his attention to other places, and, accompanied by Mr J. A. Haldane, went the same year to visit Glasgow and other large towns in the west of Scotland, to urge the formation of Sabbath-schools similar to his own; and such success attended this enterprise, that in the course of two or three months there were as many as sixty Sabbath-evening schools in full working order. In Huntly the movement began in 1796, and in Aberdeen and other neighbouring parishes a year later. Thus we find that the system of instruction

in Sabbath-schools had got a pretty fair start in the country about the close of the last century.

There are doubtless others who had begun this good work of whom the world knows nothing, and whose work will never be known till the day when all work shall appear, and when the true workers for good shall receive their reward.

It is interesting to find that in other parts of the country the subject of Sabbath-schools was engaging the attention of public bodies. We find, for example, in the records of the town council of Laurencekirk, the following minute, dated 20th April 1790: "The meeting are unanimous of opinion that a Sunday-school will be highly beneficial for the young children of this town, and think that parts of the funds could not be better applied than for to encourage such an undertaking, but decline doing anything decisive in the matter until they have an opportunity of consulting Lord Gardenstone in person."<sup>1</sup>

REV. DAVID BLAIR, BRECHIN.

Among the earliest and most prominent of those who carried out the principle of having a Sabbath-school for the religious instruction of the young, was the Rev. David Blair, one of the ministers of Brechin. Mr Blair's lot was cast in troublous times,—times when his countrymen waged war on one another; when men's blood was fired with the fervour of political and religious strife; when Royalist and Jacobite fought to the death, and Presbyterianism and Episcopacy stood against each other in bitter strife and deadly hatred. Such times were not favourable for the growth of such

<sup>1</sup> History of Laurencekirk. By Rev. W. R. Fraser, Maryton. Blackwood & Sons: 1880.

a tender plant as the Sabbath-school system then was. The soil was in bad condition ; the sowers' hands were full of other work ; the enemy was ready to root up the seed, or sow tares among it. And in these circumstances it was not possible for one in Mr Blair's position to avoid taking part to some extent in the controversies and strifes of his time. The very conscientiousness of the man, his conviction as to his duty, the sacredness in which he held the office of the ministry, prevented him remaining an indifferent spectator of the struggles in which the country was then engaged. As a stanch Presbyterian he considered it his duty, as minister of the Church to which he belonged, to warn his parishioners of the errors into which he thought they were likely to fall from the teaching of those who were hostile to the Church. As a politician he seems to have been a sturdy Hanoverian in the midst of the numerous Jacobites who lived and flourished in Brechin and the surrounding towns and neighbourhood at that time. The following anecdote, which used to be related of him, shows the nature and character of the man, and admirably illustrates his stern sense of duty :—

It appears that about the time of the '45, some of Prince Charles Edward's soldiers entered the church prepared to shoot him if he prayed for King George. Mr Blair was warned of the fact, but he nevertheless persisted in doing what he considered to be his duty ; and though the soldiers occupied the front of the gallery opposite the pulpit, he went on with the service as usual, as if they had not been there : and they "sate still," it is said, "with pistols before them, and made no disturbance."

The following minute, from the Presbytery records of 2d March 1748, illustrates the trouble and annoyance caused by the Jacobites in Brechin at that time :



"Then Mr Blair and Mr Fordyce, ministers at Brechin, being called upon, gave the following representation : That they were sorry to say that a spirit of disaffection did greatly prevail in this town and parish, and that for the present there was little appearance or probability of its decrease—nay, that it was more than before the late unnatural Rebellion, which will be evident when it is considered,—1st, That of thirteen members of which the town council of Brechin consists, six were constant attendants of a non-juring meeting-house during the time of the foresaid Rebellion; and it deserves a remark that the provost or first magistrate and one of the bailies are of that number. 2d, That all the members of the said town council, except three, were some way or other concerned in the late execrable attempt, some of them by keeping guard on the Hazard sloop prisoners, others of them by harbouring the goods of rebels, others of them by drinking the Pretender's health publicly at the cross. 3d, That in the month of August last, his Majesty and the Royal family were made the objects of scurrilous language and songs upon the public streets. That Mr Blair, one of the ministers of Brechin, took notice of these wicked and treasonable practices from the pulpit on a Lord's Day, and warned the people against them as things extremely evil in themselves, and which, if continued, behoved to draw down the just displeasure of the Government upon the place. That though he did this on a Lord's Day in presence of the gentlemen who had lately been put upon the magistracy, yet this warning was so far from having its proper effect, that a daughter of Mr Allardice, one of the present bailies of the town, sang a song in contempt of his Royal Highness the Duke, by way of insult upon Mr Blair, on the Monday immediately after the said warning was emitted. 4th, That some time in the month of

August last, John Strachan, who had been committed to Tilbury Fort on *suspicion* of treasonable practices, and had returned again to this place, said in public company that the Pretender, whom he independently called King James the Eighth, was the only rightful sovereign of these realms, for whom he had suffered, and wished to God there were not a living man in Bergen-op-Zoom, which was then besieged by the French. 5th, That so little care has been taken to put persons well affected to his Majesty's person and Government in the place upon the administration, that one Alexander Low (*our merry host of the Swan*),—reputed a Jacobite by all who know him, and was taken into custody for treasonable practices during the time of the Rebellion, and detained prisoner for several months, undertook to be evidence for the Crown, and afterwards declined it,—was, notwithstanding all this, by the influence, no doubt, of his brother-in-law Mr Mol-lison, the chief magistrate of this place, made one of the town councillors at Michaelmas last; since which time, as a proof that he is still under the old influence of the Rebellion, he had a child baptised by the non-jurant minister who resides in this town. 6th, That there are no less than two non-jurant ministers,—one who has his constant residence in the town, and another who comes from the country—viz, Mr James Lyall at Carcary, in the parish of Farnwell,—who make it their business to go from house to house, and to instil bad principles into the minds of their deluded votaries, and baptise their children, and, it's apprehended, with too great success; for numbers of those frequented the meetings of the Established Church immediately after the Rebellion, yet they have now, almost to a man, withdrawn from them, those three or four excepted, who being upon the public management, still continue to attend in order to save appear-

ances. Nay, to this purpose it's observable that on the 17th of February last, being the day of public humiliation appointed by his Majesty, there was not above three or four, who had been the attendants of non-jurant meeting-houses before and during the time of the late unnatural Rebellion, who attended worship in the Presbyterian Church, or paid the least regard to that solemn day. 7th, That, so far as the ministers foresaid know, the magistrates of the place bestow no care to discourage the spirit of disaffection which rages here, or to give check to the non-jurant ministers, or so much as to inquire into their conduct and seditious practices. It is a strong presumption of this, that though (it is said) they attend public worship in the Established Church themselves, yet none of them have ever brought their wives, or any of their children who are come to majority, along with them—nay, that it is well known that their wives and daughters are among the most zealous friends of the non-jurant preachers. 8th, That his Majesty's most zealous friends who have persisted in attending worship when King George was prayed for, when both ministers and people were in the greatest danger from armed rebels in the church, have been insulted and beat upon the public streets by disaffected persons, and such as bore arms in the Rebellion, without receiving the smallest redress from the magistrates of the place, who ought to protect the King's lieges by the execution of the laws."<sup>1</sup>

It will readily be granted that in such times, and amidst such scenes, the Sabbath-school system had not very favourable opportunities of making progress; but Mr Blair was not to be discouraged even by such formidable obstacles as these, for though harassed by

<sup>1</sup> History of Brechin. By David D. Black, F.S.A. Scot. 2d edition. Edinburgh: William Paterson. Brechin: Black & Johnstone.

opponents on every side, both political and religious, he yet found time and opportunity to devote himself to this noble work, which was at once more congenial to his taste, more likely to benefit the rising generation of his parishioners, and more in accordance with his own ideas of ministerial duty. In the true spirit of that Master who loved the little children so well, he scattered the seeds of kindness and love to the little ones according to his opportunity and ability,—seeds which are bearing fruit to this day, though we may not be able to trace the development in all its steps and stages. It must be remembered that in those times it was a much more difficult thing to establish a Sabbath-school than it is in our day. There were elements to contend with of which we know nothing. Men's minds were unsettled as to their religious life. Presbyterianism had been triumphant; yet there was an undercurrent of turbulence ready to break into a violent storm on the least occasion or opportunity. Men had not forgotten Culloden and the '45. They had not forgotten that the Duke of Cumberland had come to Brechin and the neighbourhood, and done much damage to the chapels of Episcopalians, and treated themselves with much severity. They had not forgotten that Presbyterian ministers had sympathised with, and, directly or indirectly, and sometimes both directly and indirectly, countenanced and aided this severity; and thus it is the more to be admired that one should be found in such circumstances endeavouring to furnish to the children what had evidently been much needed,—a school where they might be taught on Sabbath in Bible lore.

Nor were these the only difficulties in the way. There was besides these a deep-rooted prejudice in the minds of many against Sabbath-school teaching,

on the ground that it was taking out of the hands of parents their natural responsibility for the upbringing of their children; that it was tending to root out that reverence in the family for the due performance of religious duties, and striking at the root of family religious life. Further, many were scandalised to think that men and women wholly untrained for teaching, and untrammelled by the *formulæ* of those times, should be allowed to handle sacred subjects and instruct our youth according to the light given them. And many would have infinitely preferred to remain in darkness rather than take the light on such terms.

When these circumstances are taken into consideration, it will be acknowledged that the work of establishing a Sabbath-school was a work deserving all praise; and Brechin and the Church of Scotland have been blameworthy in allowing to remain in comparative obscurity a name so well deserving to be better known. Although David Blair had then fairly begun the system of Sabbath-school teaching in Scotland, yet his fame has scarcely gone beyond the parish in which he laboured as a minister; and even there it is known to comparatively few that he deserves the credit of sowing the seeds in our dear native land of a system that has resulted in so glorious a harvest as we now see flourishing in our midst—a system of Sabbath-school organisation extending not only over the length and breadth of our island, but extending throughout the length and breadth of the English-speaking world—a system that is gaining ground in non-English-speaking countries, and is destined to be one of the main strongholds, as it is one of the main feeders, of religious life throughout the world in future—a system for the furtherance of which there are thousands and tens of thousands of devoted men

and women giving their labour gratuitously, and from which millions and millions of children are deriving infinite benefit to their moral and spiritual being. It seems to us only right that a place which has such an honour connected with its history should not allow the exertions of its devoted citizen and minister to be overlooked in this field of Christian usefulness, especially at a time when the name and fame of other pioneers in the field are being brought before the world.

Little is known of Mr Blair's parentage, birthplace, or early life. The following is a brief summary of what is known of him :—

David Blair, M.A., studied at St Leonard's College, and had his degree from the University of St Andrews, 2d March 1719; licensed by the Presbytery of Dundee, 6th March 1728; became chaplain to Colonel Patrick Ogilvie; was called 22d May, and ordained to the parish of Lochlee, in the Presbytery of Brechin, 10th September 1729. After being at Lochlee about four years he was translated to Brechin, Second Charge, 16th May 1733; or according to Presb. and Syn. Reg., he was translated from Lochlee, called 23d April, and admitted 6th June 1733. He was translated from the Second to the First Charge of Brechin, and admitted on the 11th October 1738. A deep-rooted spirit of Jacobitism and devotion to the exiled Royal family being prevalent in the town, he thought it necessary, in August 1747, to warn his parishioners of the danger of drawing down the displeasure of the Government upon them. He died 20th April 1769, at sixty-nine years of age, and in the fortieth of his ministry, being distinguished as having opened, in 1760, the first Sabbath-school in Scotland, perhaps the first in Great Britain, while in all parts of his ministry he was equally zealous and faithful; and

such was his abhorrence of the law of patronage, that he would not even hear his colleagues who were settled on presentations. He was married twice: first, to Catherine,<sup>1</sup> daughter and heiress of John Doig of Cookston, who died in September 1753, aged forty-four . . . ; and second, to Ann Hope, on the 14th June 1759, who died 14th February 1792.

He published two sermons entitled "The Fear that's Due unto God and the King considered and recommended" (Edin., 1744—8vo); and also two single sermons (in 1748 and 1761—8vo).<sup>2</sup>

It appears that there is some inaccuracy in the above statement. It is said that Mr Blair married the heiress of Cookston; while the truth is, he married the daughter of one laird who had a son and heir. This heir's son, her nephew, in due time succeeding, wished to sell the property, and one of Mr Blair's sons bought it to keep it in the family; but it passed from the family with the succeeding generation.

This marriage connected Mr Blair with the Southesk family in his own person, and with the well-known Principal Hill of St Andrews in the next generation.

In the records of the town council of Brechin there is a minute, in October 1738, regarding the translation from the Second to the First Charge of the Rev. David Blair, "who has laboured painfully, and we hope successfully, in the work of the Gospel among us in this parish, upwards of five years bypast."

It is said to have grieved him much that none of his sons came out for the ministry, though some of them received a university education. It reflects great credit on the manse that they were able to train their children thus, and put them in a fair way of entering on

<sup>1</sup> There seems to be some confusion in the names, but that on the *tablet*, page 24, is probably correct.

<sup>2</sup> *Fasti Ecclesiæ Scoticanæ*, pt. vi. pp. 813, 816, 836.

a profession, when it is considered that at that time the income of the minister of the First Charge was perhaps not more than £100 !—exclusive of manse and glebe.

We give a digest of one of the discourses mentioned above, to show that Mr Blair was a man possessed of a clear head and an acute understanding ; that he was one who could handle his subject with a logical skill and dexterity that would do credit to many of our day who have much higher pretensions ; and above all, that he had not only deep convictions, and the power and ability to put them together, but also the courage and manliness to give expression to them from the pulpit, even in the midst of bitter opposition.

“Prov. xxiv. 21.—My son, fear thou the Lord and the king ; and meddle not with them that are given to change,”—which Mr Blair treats “in the following method :”—

“1st, I shall essay to give you some account of the fear of the Lord which the wise man here recommends.

“2d, I shall show what is imported in that fear he enjoins unto the king.

“3d, I shall give you the meaning of his caution, *‘And meddle not with them that are given to change ;’* and if time can allow, shall shut up each head with a proper application.”

The subject is then taken up in its divisions and subdivisions under each head, according to the custom of these times. Under the first head, in which he discusses the fear of the Lord, the minister says : “I shall, with all possible brevity, speak of it under the following heads :—

“1st, I shall show what this fear obviously supposes.

“2d, What is its nature.

“3d, What are the things which mainly influence its exercise.



"4th, What are the noble and excellent effects it produces in the hearts and lives of those who are happily possessed of it."

Each of these divisions is then taken up and discussed under subdivisions. Taking the first division under the first head, he says:—

"I am, *first*, to show what this fear of the Lord supposes. And

"1st, It supposes some competent knowledge of the blessed God in His nature and adorable perfections."

Under this head it is shown that man can never sufficiently adore God. Those who are totally ignorant of Him cannot have any fear of Him. Those who know Him only a little have confused notions of His attributes, and fall short of fear; and generally, in proportion as a man is ignorant he fails in this respect, but as he grows in knowledge of God, he also increases in love, in reverence, in fear.

"2d, The fear of the Lord supposes the sincere and ardent love of Him, on the account of His infinite and amiable excellencies, especially His goodness and mercy, as manifested to lost and perishing sinners in Jesus Christ."

This fear is not dread or terror, such as the captive has for his cruel taskmaster, but that reverence and respect that arises from a love that fears to give offence to the being loved, lest it should pain or grieve him.

"3d, This fear of the Lord supposes a deep, a constant, and an abiding sense of the Divine excellencies and perfections upon the mind."

Illustrated by analogy. A subject who knows the duties he owes to his sovereign, and yet ignores them when there is any personal interest at stake. So is a man who knows his duty by his God and his Saviour, and yet prefers his own sinful way.

"Having thus shown you what the fear of the

Lord supposes, I proceed to the *second* thing upon this head—namely, to show what it is in its nature.”

Jer. xxxii. 39, as compared with Jer. xxxviii. Further illustrated under the next head—“namely, to show what are these things the believing and attentive consideration whereof influences this religious fear.”

“1st, The believing consideration of these infinite and adorable perfections which are essentially in God, is of powerful and mighty influence to excite religious fear.” Jer. v. 22 ; Rev. xv. 3, 4 ; Job iv. 8.

“2d, The believing consideration of these dreadful punishments the Lord has denounced against sin in His word.” Ps. xi. 5, 6.

A pardoned rebel never forgets the “awe and reverence” due to his prince who obtained his pardon. Ps. cxix. 20 ; Luke xii. 5 ; Heb. xii. 28, 29.

“3d, Another thing which influences this godly fear whereof we now treat, is the attentive consideration of the Divine mercy and goodness, as it is manifested in the various effects of it to poor sinners in and through the Lord Jesus.”

“A child amongst men feels a greater force in the many favours and marks of kindness he has received from his affectionate father, to make him dread his displeasure, than any punishments he has to fear from him in case of misbehaviour.” So man looks to God. Hos. iii. 5 ; Ps. xxxiv. 9.

“The *fourth* thing” is to show “the excellent effects it produces on the minds of those who are happily possessed of it.”

1st, This religious fear has a mighty and a happy influence upon purifying the hearts of those who are happily possessed of it. Ps. xix. 9.

2d, It “produces a holy life and a well-ordered conversation.”

A faithful servant will serve his master cheerfully. Much more will a Christian serve his God. Ps. xxxiv. 11-13.

3d, It "produces a humble and quiet submission to the will of Providence."

Lastly, this fear "raises such as have it above the slavish fear of men." Isa. xii. 13. It raises him above the influence of flattery. It will enable him to render God and man respectively their due regard. What is man without God? If God be for us, who can be against us? Fear God and not man. Luke xii. 5, &c. ; Dan. iii. 16, &c.

#### "Application.

"1st, The prevailing wickedness of this age shows that the most part of men *have not the fear of God before their eyes*. Proudly impugning of Gospel truth. Neglecting of public worship. Commission of crimes and sins of an evil heart." Isa. v. 20.

"2d, See how defective . . . the Lord's people are," in this fear.

"3d, Hence see what is our proper work on this day of humiliation." Hos. xiv. 1.

"4th, Endeavour to be possessed" with this fear. For

"1st, Ps. xxxvi. 12.

"2d, We in this land are threatened with several very heavy judgments: foreign invasion, Popish pretenders to the throne. We are at war with France and Spain, and we are divided in our civil and sacred concerns." Isa. xiii. 13, 14 ; Mal. iii. 16, 17.

3d, The fear of the Lord "renders men truly wise and excellent."

Illustration—Joseph and his brethren.

"4th, Endeavour to attain the fear of the Lord ;

because it is the best way to attain to the comforts of life." Prov. xix. 23.

"Lastly, Endeavour to attain to the fear of the Lord; for it hath the covenant of peace here and a blessed immortality hereafter."

The other sermon and the addition are treated in the same style—abounding with illustration and apt quotation from Scripture, and going straight to the mark, much to the chagrin of many who listened. But Mr Blair felt he had a duty to perform, and he, like a faithful servant, did his duty in spite of calumny and opposition. He says in the preface to the sermons, "I make no doubt but this discourse will expose me to the very angry resentments of a party; but lest they should vex themselves in vain, they may please know that, so long as I have the testimony of a good conscience on my side, I am quite fearless of unreasonable man; and if my heart deceive me not, and the God whom I desire to serve in the Gospel of his Son does not deny me His grace, am ready to suffer harder things for my principles and the faithful discharge of my duty, than those who wish me worst have it in their power to inflict."

It is surprising how soon the name and the memory of eminent men become forgotten and unknown, even in the sphere of their most active and useful labour. The only thing that serves to keep the memory of David Blair from sinking to oblivion is a tablet, placed inside the old church of Brechin by his son, to his memory.

**Erected**

By DAVID BLAIR of COOKSTONE, Merchant in Dundee,

In Memory of his Father,

THE REV. DAVID BLAIR,

One of the Ministers of the City of Brechin, who with unwearied diligence and zeal, during a ministry of thirty-six years, sought the glory of his Divine Master, and the best interests of his Parishioners, and died 20th April 1769, in the sixty-ninth year of his age.

Also in Memory of his Spouse,

CHRISTINA DOIG

whose father, JOHN DOIG of Cookstone, was for a number of years First Magistrate of Brechin. She died in September 1753, in the forty-fourth year of her age.

They, with seven of their children, are interred between this Monument and the opposite pillar.

Four more of their children died abroad, and one was interred in the burying-ground north of this Church.

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MR BLAIR, about the year 1760, instituted a Sabbath Evening School in Brechin, the first, it is believed, that was opened in Scotland.

" Day dawned : within a curtained room,  
 Filled to faintness with perfume,  
 A lady lay at point of doom.  
 Day closed : a child had seen the light ;  
 But, for the lady fain and bright,  
 She rested in undreaming night.  
 Spring rose : the lady's grave was green,  
 And near it oftentimes was seen  
 A gentle boy with thoughtful mien.  
 Years fled : he wore a manly face,  
 And struggled in the world's rough race,  
 And won at last a lofty place.  
 And then he died ! Behold before ye  
 Humanity's poor sum and story :  
 Life—Death—and all the rest is glory."

—W. B. PROCTER.

But though man passes away and is forgotten, yet his works live after him, and tell of what he was,—what life he lived—what words he spoke—what good he did : as Dr H. Bonar beautifully puts it—

" Not myself, but the truth that in life I have spoken ;  
 Not myself, but the seed that in life I have sown,—  
 Shall pass on to ages—all about me forgotten,  
 Save the truth I have spoken, the things I have done.  
 So let my living be ; so be my dying,—  
 So let my name lie unblazoned, unknown :  
 Unpraised and unmissed, I shall still be remembered.  
 Yes—but remembered by what I have done."

#### RISE OF SABBATH-SCHOOLS IN ENGLAND—

MR ROBERT RAIKES.

In Gloucester, the native county of Robert Raikes, we find attempts at Sabbath-schools long before his day. A monument in Huxley Church, erected in 1726 to the memory of Mrs Catherine Boevey of Flaxley Abbey, records her "clothing and feeding her indigent

neighbours, and teaching their children, some of whom every Sunday, by turns, she entertained at her house, and condescended to examine them herself." Sunday-schools were springing up now in various places throughout England.

It seems as if the Spirit of God had been brooding over the darkness and depravity of mankind, and seeking to elevate our race by getting at the young germ before it had gone quite away in the old paths, that the sapling might be bent in the right direction, and grow Godward instead of devilward. It is like some other parallels we find in history, where men's minds seem all to be roused in one common direction as by a single impulse, though they know not one another. There seems to have been a growing desire throughout the country in this direction, towards the latter half of the last century; but it was not till Robert Raikes took the field that Sabbath-schools gained anything like a permanent footing. From that time they have reached by slow degrees, through many difficulties and various stages, their present state, which, though not what it might be and ought to be, is yet astonishing when we consider the many hindrances they have had to encounter in regard to the teaching staff, the pecuniary aid, and the accommodation, and many other difficulties that they well know who take an interest in this noble work.

Robert Raikes was born in Gloucester on the 14th September 1735, about eighteen months after the Rev. David Blair was translated to Brechin.<sup>1</sup> "In a house in Palace Yard, just beneath the shadow of Gloucester's grand cathedral, he first saw the light." His father was a printer, and the publisher of the 'Gloucester

<sup>1</sup> Robert Raikes, *Journalist and Philanthropist: a History of the Origin of Sunday-schools*. By Alfred Gregory. Sixth thousand. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Journal.' Robert Raikes was bred to his father's business. On the death of his father, September 7, 1757, when Robert was only twenty-two years of age, he succeeded to the business, with its duties and responsibilities of sole proprietor and editor of the 'Gloucester Journal,' which, by his assiduity and courtesy, spread and gained influence, while he himself gained the respect of the whole district. It is said that "there is in Raikes's Journal a remarkable absence of those scurrilous personalities with which most newspapers of the eighteenth century abounded. Not a single instance of personal abuse can be found in the 'Gloucester Journal' during the whole of the many years it was under the control of Robert Raikes." Would ye but read, mark, learn, inwardly digest, and copy this example, ye journalists and newsmongers of the present day! What a difference of tone would your papers have, and how would you yourselves rise in public estimation! It was not at his business, however, that Robert Raikes was destined to become famous. It was a work of a very different nature. Stirred in his inmost being at the condition of the jails in his native town and county, of which there were only two, Robert Raikes visited them, and saw the direct connection between ignorance and crime, and the uselessness of punishing crime without using means of preventing it by reforming the life. The condition of the jail may be seen from these facts: "Though from forty to sixty prisoners were received within its walls every week, there was but one court for them all. The day-room for men and women felons was only 12 feet long by 11 feet broad. Persons imprisoned for debt . . . were huddled together in a den 14 feet by 11 feet, without windows, and with no provision for admitting light and air save a hole broken in the plaster-wall . . . Owing to the



utter absence of all sanitary arrangements, the whole place continually reeked with infection, and deaths were of constant occurrence. . . . The indiscriminate hoarding together of debtors and felons, men and women, child offenders and hardened criminals, was productive of the most fearful immorality. Every new inmate, on entering this den of iniquity, was required by his fellow-prisoners to pay a certain sum of money called 'garnish,' which was immediately spent in beer, bought from the jailer, who eked out his emoluments by the profits derived from his trade." Such was the condition in which Raikes found our jail system, and he set himself in right earnest to try to bring about some reform. He had access to the public ear in a way singularly suited to work reform in this horrible system, and he never failed to make urgent use of it. His Journal became the medium of appeal to the public, and there never was a case that seemed to demand public notice that escaped him. His Journal is full of notices about prisoners of different classes who had been convicted, some of very paltry offences, who were yet visited with unduly severe penalties.

Robert Raikes and John Howard were contemporaries, and it is no wonder that two men of such kindred dispositions should have been brought together; but Raikes was before Howard in this noble work. When the latter visited Gloucester county jail in 1773 he dined with Raikes, and bears his testimony to the amount and value of the work done. He says: "In September the felons were very pitiable objects indeed—half naked and almost famished. In December their appearance was much altered."

Such were the exertions of Raikes, and to such an extent did his appeals *come home*, that at last the authorities determined to remedy the state of affairs;

and the result was, that a new prison was built in Gloucester vastly improved in accommodation and arrangement. Miss Burney says of the new jail (writing in 1788): "Every culprit is to have a separate cell; every cell is clean, neat, and small, looking towards a wide expanse of country, and, far more fitted to his supplications, a wide expanse of the heavens. An air of cleanliness and health seem to be considered, but no other indulgence."

His visits to prison had made a deep impression on his mind, and he anxiously groped for some means by which he might stem the tide of the depravity he saw, when one day a happy accident opened the way to him, — a way he had not dreamed of, or, at least, a way he had not discovered. He narrates the incident in plain terms when he says: "Some business leading me one morning into the suburbs of the city where the lowest of the people chiefly reside, I was struck with concern at seeing a group of children, wretchedly ragged, at play in the streets. I asked an inhabitant whether these people belonged to that part of the town, and lamented their misery and idleness. 'Ah, sir,' said the woman to whom I was speaking, 'could you take a view of this part of the town on a Sunday you would be shocked indeed, for then the street is filled with multitudes of these wretches, who, released that day from employment, spend their time in noise and riot, playing at *chuck*, and cursing and swearing in a manner so horrid as to convey to any serious mind an idea of hell rather than any other place.'"

Ruminating on what he had seen, and what he had been told of the wicked way in which the young spent the Sundays, Mr Raikes, after consideration and consultation with others, employed four "decent, well-disposed women, at a shilling a Sunday, to collect the children, and instruct them in reading and in the

Church Catechism, and to communicate with the clergyman of the district, who was so much pleased with the proposal as to lend his assistance by going round to the schools on a Sunday afternoon to examine the progress that was made, and to enforce order and decorum among such a set of little heathens."

He was exceedingly solicitous that the children should attend the services of the church with as much regularity as possible in the circumstances in which he found them, and laid down a set of regulations for the purpose. He says: "The children were to come soon after ten in the morning and stay till twelve, and they were to go home and return at one, and after reading a lesson, they were to be conducted to church. After church they were to be employed in repeating the Catechism till half after five, and then to be dismissed with an injunction to go home without making a noise, and by no means to play in the street."

He would never take as an excuse for absence from the Sabbath-school, nor as an excuse from parents, on whom he called to urge them to send their children to his school, that they had not clothes fit. It was his theory—and it was the correct theory, true then and for all time—that clothing that was fit to be seen on the street could not be unfit to be seen in the Sabbath-school. What he wanted to see, and what he insisted on, was what we ought even yet to insist on—that the children had faces clean, hands clean, and hair combed. Truly a wise man and a good was Robert Raikes, and a persevering man withal. What with his energetic labours among the poorer classes, and his unremitting representations in his own Journal of the benefits likely to be derived from this new system, there arose now abundant fruits everywhere to reward him for his diligence, and to cause men to revere, to praise, and to bless his name and memory. A vigorous ally, and

one equally self-denying as Robert Raikes, was the clergyman to whom he applied for assistance in the prosecution of this work. This was Thomas Stock, who, if he were not first in the matter, was at least a second almost if not quite as good as the first. Being the parish parson, he took the principal superintendence of the school, and bore a considerable part of the expense of it; and doubtless his influence in the parish, and his countenance and help in this work, were in a great measure the cause of such success.

So great was the success of the scheme, that the magistrates passed a unanimous vote to the following effect: "The benefit of Sunday-schools to the morals of the rising generation is too evident not to merit the recognition of this bench, and the thanks of the community to the gentlemen instrumental in promoting them." Listen to these words, O ye magistrates, and ye who sit in council with them! Listen and learn! Learn to recognise and to acknowledge the good work of any man in behalf of the community over which you preside.

Queen Charlotte in 1787 being informed that Robert Raikes was at Windsor, sent for him, and asked "by what accident a thought which promised so much benefit to the lower orders of people as the institution of Sunday-schools was suggested to his mind, and what effects were observable in consequence on the manners of the poor. She said she envied those who had the power of doing good by thus personally promoting the welfare of society in giving instruction and morality to the general mass of the common people,—a pleasure from which, by her position, she was debarred." The interest shown in the movement by the Queen had a great effect on the whole nation. It continued to spread among all classes of society, and it became in time the fashionable thing to engage in teach-

ing the poor children, who had hitherto been so much neglected. The pen of Raikes was ever busy, both for the press and those who wrote to him privately for information and advice. His work was now frequently taken notice of in public, both in the pulpit and on the platform, as well as by the press. Leaders of all ranks—noblemen and gentlemen—were in correspondence with him; and the principal persons in Gloucester who were in the habit of employing labour, gave their testimony that the establishment of Sunday-schools in their city had worked a great reformation on the multitudes they employed. “From being idle, ungovernable, profligate, and filthy in the extreme, they say the boys and girls are become not only more cleanly and decent in their appearance, but are greatly humanised in their manners, more orderly, tractable, and attentive to business, and of course more serviceable than they ever expected to find them. Cursing and swearing, and other vile expressions, which used to form the sum of their conversation, are now very rarely heard among them.” Many of the bishops of the Church of England, in giving their charges to the clergy of their dioceses, pointed out to them the incalculable benefits to be derived from a system of Sabbath-school teaching, and enjoined them to consider the matter and put it into practice.

Such was the influence of Raikes on the subject of Sabbath-schools, that a letter from him to William Fox, who had become interested in the movement, caused Fox and a few other gentlemen to organise, in August 1785, the “Society for the Establishment and Support of Sunday-schools throughout the Kingdom of Great Britain.” And at a general meeting of the Society in 1787, there is a resolution to this effect: “Your committee, taking into consideration the humble zeal and merits of Robert Raikes, Esq. of Gloucester,

who may be justly considered as the original founder as well as the liberal promoter of Sunday-schools, beg leave to recommend to the general meeting that he be chosen an honorary member of this Society." Robert Raikes had his whole heart in this work : he not only went to the slums and dens of Gloucester to seek the children and rescue them from the degradation to which they would have been doomed, but he urged parents to send their children to the Sabbath-school, he counselled others, he encouraged any who were engaged in the like work ; and it is the testimony of one woman, that the place in which she lived was now like heaven compared with what it used to be before the children went to the Sabbath-school. The Sabbath-scholars used to assemble in a house, and go to church under the care of a matron. Raikes was generally there himself, and they used to come round him after service and make their bow to him. "The great principle," he says, "I inculcate is, to be kind and good-natured to each other; not to provoke one another; to be dutiful to their parents; not to offend God by cursing and swearing; and such little plain precepts as all may comprehend." His work with the children, in finding out what they needed to train them, and his endeavouring to get what was most suitable to touch their better nature, he speaks of as "botanising in human nature."

A young Quaker, Joseph Lancaster, had gone to visit him, and make inquiries about the origin of Sabbath-schools; and it is related that on one occasion, "leaning on the arm of his visitor, the old man led him through the thoroughfares of Gloucester to the spot in a back street where the first school was held. 'Pause here,' said the old man. Then uncovering his head and closing his eyes, he stood for a moment in silent prayer. Then turning to his

friend, while the tears rolled down his cheeks, he said, 'This is the spot on which I stood when I saw the destitution of the children and the desecration of the Sabbath by the inhabitants of the city. As I asked, "Can nothing be done?" a voice answered, "Try." I did try, and see what God has wrought.'".

To the end of his days Robert Raikes never ceased to be deeply interested in the success of his Sabbath-schools; corresponding with all who chose to write to him on the subject, showing their work to persons of all ranks—kings, queens, and princes were among his visitors—he never failed to interest them in his scheme. But it is to be regretted that he ignored in these visits his friend and coadjutor, the Rev. Thomas Stock; and this is the more surprising, inasmuch as the one was a clergyman and the other a member and staunch supporter of the Established Church. Let us hope that it was more an oversight than an intentional slight, and that the name of Raikes having become associated with the Sabbath-school system, he was naturally sought after by those who visited the scenes of his labours. As he was now verging on seventy years of age, he retired from the proprietorship of the 'Gloucester Journal,' and received an annuity of £300. He died a few years afterwards; and on a plain monument near his grave is inscribed—"Sacred to the memory of Robert Raikes (late of this city), Founder of Sabbath-schools, who departed this life April 5, 1811, aged 75 years."

In America we find a similar movement early in the last century. It is said that "a Sunday-school was founded, between 1740 and 1747, by one Ludvig Hacker, at Ephrata, Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, among the German Seventh-Day Baptists settled there. After the battle of Brandywine, fought between the American colonists and the British troops in 1777, the

school-room was used as an hospital; and this event occasioned the breaking up of the school."

In the 'Illustrated London News' of 3d July 1880 a paragraph to this effect appears:—

"It is calculated by Mr Fountain Hartly, one of the honorary secretaries of the Sunday-school Union, that the present number of Sunday-scholars in England and Wales is 3,800,000—about 15 per cent of the population; and the number of Sunday-school teachers 422,000. In Scotland there are, it is estimated, 494,500 scholars, and 47,972 teachers. This calculation includes the several Presbyterian Churches, the Congregationalists, Baptists, and Wesleyans, as well as Episcopalians. In Ireland, reckoning Protestants alone, the numbers are stated at 345,920 scholars, and 32,548 teachers. This makes a total exceeding four and a half million scholars and half a million teachers in the United Kingdom. The British colonies of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand have 387,800 scholars, and 46,764 teachers. In the United States of America there are 6,500,000 scholars, with 853,000 teachers of Sunday-schools. The Protestant Churches on the continent of Europe, which have been influenced by British example, should also be reckoned."

And yet it is abundantly evident that the Sabbath-schools ought to be still more numerously attended than they are. By way of illustration, take the following facts. In the burgh of Brechin the number of scholars attending the day-schools is 1878, while the number attending the Sunday-schools is only 1270—that is, rather under one-third less than the number attending the day-schools. We believe this to be above the average percentage, which may be reckoned at not more than 60 per cent, so far as we can gather.

Now we are of opinion that every child that is considered by the Education Act to be fit to attend the



day-school is also quite fit to attend the Sunday-school; and it is the duty of Churches to see to this, just as much as it is the duty of school-boards to see that they attend the day-school. The one is legally bound, the other is morally bound, to see to this, and we hope the suggestion will be taken in good part.

There are some children in circumstances that would guarantee that their religious education is not neglected, but there are far more who are unfortunately not so favourably placed. In any case, it is the duty of the Churches to see that this instruction is attended to. Until this is done we cannot expect that knowledge of the Bible, and that intelligence in religious education, that every child of Christian parents ought to possess, the lack of which they who come in contact with their fellow-men in the most trying, and often the most solemn circumstances, have too often to deplore.

## CHAPTER II.

## PRESENT SABBATH-SCHOOL SYSTEM—ITS DEFECTS.

WHEN Sabbath-schools were yet in their infancy, John Wesley is said to have made this remark: "Who knows but some of these schools may become nurseries for Christians." And as the movement gained strength and vigour, and spread throughout the land, Adam Smith the philosopher said of it: "No plan has promised to effect a change of manners with equal ease and simplicity since the days of the apostles."

Both the predictions of these two eminent men have literally been fulfilled, for the Sabbath-schools are indeed and in truth become the nurseries of Church-membership in all the Churches of the land; and they have become now more than ever the means of spreading Gospel truth, and of getting at the morals of the young, and so bending the twig in the direction it is intended to grow while it is in that state of pliability which fits it for taking its proper bias.

"Scratch the green rind in the sapling, or wantonly twist it in the soil,

The scarred and crooked oak will tell of thee for centuries to come :  
Even so mayst thou guide the mind to good, or lead it to the  
marrings of evil ;

For disposition is builded up by the fashioning of first impressions :  
Wherefore, though the voice of instruction waited for the ear of  
reason,

Yet with his mother's milk the young child drinketh education."

—TUPPER.

The Sabbath-school system is no longer a doubtful experiment, but an accomplished fact. People no longer shake their heads about the instruction or the teachers of Sabbath-schools, but they look upon the whole work as a blessing. Nothing, we believe, would be considered a greater calamity to our country than the closing of our Sabbath-schools, or the breaking off from the system now in force of giving religious instruction. It is a lever in the hands of all Christian communities for the improvement of the young that ought to be recognised and encouraged far more than it has hitherto been. We hope to see, as some of the results of this centenary celebration, the communities bestirring themselves more to give aid to those who have been struggling with this work, both in a pecuniary and in an educational point of view.

Since it is now almost a universal practice to have a Sabbath-school wherever there is a Christian community, even though there may not be a church, it is no longer a question as to the fitness of such a system; but it has long been a question that has caused considerable anxiety among the Churches, how to make the Sabbath-schools an efficient means of carrying out the work of religious instruction so as to give some satisfactory return for all the labour, and pains, and expense bestowed upon them. Especially is this the case at the present day, when religious instruction in our public schools is a debated point, and when it is in the power of school-boards to say it shall not be taught in their schools. In these circumstances it has become the imperative duty of the Churches to take up the matter in all earnestness, and try what can be done with the working material at command to render our Sabbath-schools efficient as the recognised medium and the only sure means of imparting that

religious knowledge to the children which every true Christian parent so much desires, and which they who take an active part in this great work so anxiously strive for.

The great question before the Churches is how to make the Sabbath-school most efficient as a means of forming and moulding a sound moral tone among the young throughout the land—as a means of helping the home-training, so that the home circle and the Sabbath-school may mutually act and react on one another, and so be brought to bear on this grand aim, the godly upbringing of the young. How shall we secure such results from our present institutions as to be at all commensurate with the amount of care, pains, and expense bestowed upon them? Perhaps the best way to get at a solution of the difficulty will be to point out some of the evils or defects of the present system.

Taking it as an acknowledged fact that it is the duty of the Christian Church to see to the instruction of the young, at least in the truths contained in God's holy Word, it is surely also the duty of the Church to find the best means of accomplishing this work. It is one thing to see that a principle is sound and right, and quite another and a different thing to gird up the loins and put forth the hand to help to put the principle into action. Every man acknowledges that industry is a glorious principle; even the sluggard will agree to that, though he will not rouse himself to put the principle into execution, but prefers to remain in poverty. Everybody acknowledges that the Sabbath-school is a good thing; but how few will come forward and say, "I will be glad if I can be of any help to you in this good work"!

There was an old man who had three sons, all of them ready enough to enjoy the fruits of their father's industry, but too lazy to work themselves. The old

man, knowing their failing, and foreseeing that his hard-won savings would soon be squandered after he left them, called them together to his dying-bed, and informed them that there was a treasure hid in a certain field on the farm ; but he would not tell the exact spot in the field where the treasure was hid. He said it was hidden deep down in the field, and he who dug deepest would be most likely to find it after his death. Accordingly, after the old man died, the brothers set out to the field to try to find this hidden treasure, and they dug deep and long till they had turned up the whole field ; but no treasure did they find. At length, after they had sown the field, and the crop grew up, they were surprised to see such an abundant return for the work bestowed on the field, and then they saw that the treasure lay in properly working the field, and learnt the lesson the old man meant to teach. Is there no sage old man in the Churches who could point out to the parents that there is a treasure hid in the field of God's Word? and if they dig deep in that field, and teach their children to do likewise, they will reap a grand reward, not only in seeing their children grow up good, God-fearing men and women, but afterwards they will, by the grace of God, have the joy of seeing them heirs of the kingdom. "Plough deep while sluggards sleep, and you will have enough both to sell and to keep," as poor Richard says.

The work of Sabbath-schools has been left pretty much to a few zealous ardent spirits who are devoted sons and daughters of the Christian Church, and to them it has fallen to keep this vast machine going—oftentimes with increasing numbers of scholars, but with the same or very slightly increasing teaching power. The surprising thing is, not that the Sabbath-schools are not better, but that they are half so good as they are. There are parents who, so far

from superintending the lessons presented for the Sabbath-school, or seeing that they are prepared, seem to think they are conferring a favour on the school and those connected with it if they send their children there; while the great bulk of the Church have looked on either with indifference, or a kind of negative sympathy that is very discouraging; while some may wish that the efforts in this praiseworthy work may be successful, but they will not move a finger to help. We require more hearty co-operation, both on the part of parents and on the part of the Church generally; and until some method is devised whereby this object may be attained, our whole Sabbath-school system will fail to render that return which might naturally be expected from so praiseworthy and so necessary an undertaking.

A great defect has hitherto been the want of a proper system of lessons, so graduated as to meet the requirements of the children of different ages who attend the Sabbath-school. We are glad to see an advance in this direction by the Church of Scotland. In the 'Sabbath-School Treasury and Juvenile Missionary Record' there is a graduated scale to meet this demand. But why confine it to the 'Record'? Why not print it separately as well, and let others have the benefit of it by paying so much per hundred? It is short-sighted policy to say,—If you do not take the 'Record,' you will not get the lessons. It is time to learn wisdom. Let us be wise in our day and generation.

## ARRANGEMENT OF CLASSES.

If there were some system such as might be universally adopted, it would cure much that is anomalous in our Sabbath-school arrangements. As matters

stand at present, almost every class in the Sabbath-school is a spectacle of incongruity. You find children of various years and attainments all classed together—scholars of eleven or twelve years of age, and of considerable ability and intelligence, in the same class with those who have not yet learned to read ; a state of things at once a drag to the teacher and a detriment to the class. Now, with a graduated system of lessons, it would be easy to classify age and intelligence so as at once to benefit the scholar and relieve the teacher.

Let us suppose, by way of putting these suggestions into some practical shape, that there are four standards or grades of lessons. This would at once group the children into four different grades or classes ; the first consisting of children from five to seven years of age, who could be taught by means of pictures of Bible subjects, such as the plants, animals, scenes, and costumes, and the like, where the teacher would have ample scope for interesting and instructing his scholars by relating something connected with the subject of the lesson. That, with a text of Scripture or four lines of a Psalm or hymn, would be enough for this class. The second standard would consist of children from seven to nine years of age ; and they might be expected to repeat by heart a verse of a Psalm or hymn, a text of Scripture, and a question in the Shorter Catechism ; and whatever reading is done, let it be mostly historical—such as the lives of Joseph, Daniel, &c. The third standard would consist of scholars from nine to eleven, and they might be expected to prepare a Psalm or hymn, a text of Scripture, a question or two in the Catechism with proofs, and lessons in the Bible and Testament of such a nature that more reflection is required than in the lower standard. The fourth standard would consist of

all those above eleven years of age, and they might take the memory work of standard three, some of the higher work in Bible study, and a written exercise or essay on some Scripture subject.

In this way the Sabbath-school would become an easy preparation for entering on the higher work of the Bible-class, and the gradual ascent to this position would make the work easier, and the whole system consecutive. Then after a year or two at the Bible-class, those of ordinary intelligence would be well prepared to enter the young communicants' class, preparatory to becoming members of the Church. This would cure an evil too prevalent at the present time, when young men and women come up as catechumens, after several years of neglect of Bible study, far more ignorant than when they left the Sabbath-school. Not only so, but what is of vast importance, those who had gone through such a course of training might be considered well qualified in their turn to take a class in the Sabbath-school. This is a point too much ignored. It seems to us that a young person of average intelligence who has received instruction in a Sabbath-school for six or seven years, who has attended the Bible-class for two or three years, and who has attended the young communicants' or catechumens' class, and has become a member of the Church, ought to be quite fit, so far as religious knowledge is concerned, to take a class in the Sabbath-school.

In this way a great desideratum—viz., the lack of teachers in the Sabbath-school would be met; there would be always a feeling of security to a certain extent in this respect, and we should not see the discouraging spectacle of classes with numbers so large that it would require three teachers to do them justice instead of one.



## ANNUAL TREATS, ETC.

But this is not all that is required to remedy the defects in our Sabbath-school system. We may have the classes divided into standards, we may have schemes of lessons corresponding to the standards, we may have all the machinery for carrying on our Sabbath-schools, and yet we may want the essential, the vital requisite for securing success. All that is only a vast machine for no use unless we can secure the attention of the scholar. That is the point. Many and many a plan has been tried to secure this, and yet not one has been successful so far as we have heard. Sermons have been preached, addresses have been given, visiting and advising with parents have been tried, and though these means have all done so much, yet the effect has not been permanent or satisfactory. Prizes have been given for work done and for work hoped for, trips and treats have been given, but it has generally been found that all the inducements held out to Sabbath-scholars have as yet egregiously failed in securing that uniform attention to the work that is necessary to secure even a fair amount of religious knowledge. The annual treat, whether in the shape of a soiree, or a cheap trip, or a children's treat, however well meant, has produced only temporary results, and these not always of the most desirable type. To those children who attend the Sabbath-school regularly they are an encouragement and an inducement to prepare more carefully, and attend to the work of the school more closely; to others they act as a stimulus to attend the Sabbath-school with more regularity, and as an inducement to endeavour to please their teachers for the time; while they draw together, often from other Sabbath-schools, numbers of children who go about seek-

ing, not instruction, not religious knowledge, but whatever kind of entertainment is to be had. How parents and others can allow such a debasing practice to go on, and how any right-minded person can countenance such a thing, it is difficult to understand. Why not make a rule in every Sabbath-school that none but exceptional cases shall be admitted to the Sabbath-school for so many weeks before the treat is given, and thus put down a practice so detrimental to Sabbath-schools and to the morals of the children? But after all the trouble of trying to induce improvement by this kind of enjoyment, it is the sad and disappointing experience of almost all who take part in this most necessary Christian work, that, as soon as the period of excitement is over, the old habits of indifferent attendance, bad preparation of lessons, and careless demeanour return and prevail, thus rendering our Sabbath-schools profitless to the scholars, and repulsive, or at least unattractive, to the teacher.

It is evident, then, that the annual treat has proved ineffectual in procuring the much-needed results in our Sabbath-schools. Not only so, but the annual prize has also failed to produce the effects that such a stimulus might be expected to afford.

Prizes in schools where there is a wholesome rivalry for place and distinction, and where there is a daily inducement to excel, are found to work beneficially on the whole school to keep up that healthy tone which goes to infuse life and vigour into our educational system (although we believe there is a still better method of obtaining the same result, as we shall afterwards show). But prizes in Sabbath-schools where there is no such rivalry, where all effort is left to the will of the scholar, and where the prize is more frequently a bribe to induce good behaviour, proper preparation, and better attendance at school, &c., than a reward for actual

work done, the results are very different from those of the ordinary day-school ; for as every Sabbath-scholar is sure of a prize, and as the prizes are by no means proportionate to the merits of the respective scholars, the stimulus of rivalry and healthy competition is taken away, and there is frequently considerable dissatisfaction among the Sabbath-scholars, as well as among others, on that account. And the natural question is sometimes indignantly asked, "Why should those who are careless have the same reward, sometimes even greater, than those who are diligent? Why have not those who are diligent some distinction above those who are indifferent?" Thus it happens that what is meant to be a stimulus to diligence defeats its own purpose, and renders those indifferent who, under a different arrangement, would be sure to excel.

Besides, the length of time that children require to wait before the prize can be obtained is apt to cool down any enthusiasm before the session is well begun, and it is only a few weeks before the prize is to be got that there is any perceptible improvement. Hence the prize system does not work as it ought to do in our Sabbath-school. Nor does it give anything like a sufficient return for the expense incurred. There being no competition, no rivalry, no place for distinction, the careless and the diligent being placed on the same level, the whole work of the school is rendered unsuccessful and unsatisfactory.

It appears, then, that some other method of dealing with our Sabbath-schools is imperatively required,—something that will meet the child's desire for an immediate reward for work done—something that would keep up the zeal from week to week, and not only benefit the scholar, but relieve to a considerable extent both the teacher and all who take part in this most necessary work.

Of all the manifold duties that a minister is called on to encounter, the Sabbath-school is among the most important—next to the preaching of the Gospel, perhaps the first in importance: but though it occupies so prominent a place in the actual range of his work, and so prominent a place also in his own estimation, it is that part of his work that, as a general rule, gives least satisfaction, and renders back the least return for the labour bestowed on it; and in this way it is perhaps the least attractive part, and that which is too often a drag on the whole machinery of his congregational work; and frequently it is the perplexing question, rising from a mind worried and harassed by a sense of the ineffectual attempts to bring the Sabbath-school into good working order, What shall I do with my Sabbath-school? How secure more regular attendance, more thorough preparation of the lessons, and more becoming conduct on the part of the scholars? How shall I excite a desire on the part of parents to see that their children attend school, and help to further the work by superintending the lessons at home? And how raise a sense of duty among the congregation for becoming Sabbath-school teachers? Such questions are constantly recurring to the mind of every anxious minister; for however successful in all his other work, he is frequently baffled by the Sabbath-school. Notwithstanding all the efforts put forth to make it move smoothly on its own wheels, to carry it on with some sort of creditable appearance, so as to give satisfaction to those who take an interest in this necessary and important work, there is little progress made, and there is little pleasure to any who engage in active teaching.

Every effort is found to be ineffectual to overcome the evils that exist everywhere in this department of Christian work. Like a ship that obeys not the helm,

nor yields to her guiding hand, but keeps the whole crew in a state of continual anxiety, perplexity, and vexation because their dear craft is so disobedient and unmanageable, so is the Sabbath-school, however well equipped with teachers: it does not obey the hand that guides it, but keeps all in a state of annoyance and vexation, notwithstanding all the pains that are taken with it, both by the minister, the superintendent, and the teachers, striving on the one hand to make the Sabbath-school attractive and pleasant, and on the other to make the lessons interesting by illustration and by anecdote, using every means to impart Gospel truth in a way that will please, strike, and attract the young mind; but, as a rule, all their efforts are far from being crowned with success.

That parents and the older members of families are in a great measure to blame for this want of success is most true; for there is a feeling, and one that affords just ground for complaint, that they do not take any interest in the Sabbath-school, the preparation of the lessons, the inculcation of respect for and obedience to those who take the trouble of teaching their children, nor do they see to it that the attendance is regular. They seem to be indifferent to the progress of the children in Christian knowledge, to have little sympathy with the Sabbath-school teachers, and the prosperity and success of the schools themselves. That this is not as it ought to be, every one will readily acknowledge; and until we get some method that will rectify it, it is likely to remain the same. It would be a great help, and would go a great way to cure some of the existing evils of our Sabbath-school system, if the parents would co-operate with the teachers to see to the proper carrying out of the work.

## CHAPTER III.

## NEW SCHEME.

It seems clear that some improvement in the system of conducting our Sabbath-schools is extremely necessary, since the present mode is so unsuitable in its organisation, its method of operation, and especially in its results. And any system calculated to render Sabbath-school teaching less uphill work, less burdensome, or in some degree more attractive,—any system that would serve to overcome the prevailing indifference with regard to the work of the Sabbath-school, that would secure better preparation of lessons and more regular attendance, and at the same time improve the tone of the school,—any system that would help not only to improve the scholar, but enlist the sympathy of the home circle in the work, and induce that circle to stretch out a helping hand—that would conduce to make the work attractive to the scholar and pleasant to the teacher,—would not be unwelcome to all who take an interest in this great and important Christian work.

The following simple scheme has been tried with eminent success. It may be stated in two sentences—

For each lesson satisfactorily prepared and repeated or tested by examination, let there be given

a *ticket* with the name of such lesson printed on it, thus—

|               |        |            |
|---------------|--------|------------|
| BIBLE LESSON. | PSALM. | CATECHISM. |
|---------------|--------|------------|

At the end of the session, when all tickets are returned, let there be given to each scholar a *certificate* showing the number of tickets gained in each subject during the year, and indicating the attendance and conduct of the scholar, thus—

*(The Certificate may have a plate of the Church or Sabbath-school at the top.*

*Then name of Sabbath-school.)*

*Certificate of Merit.*

*Name of Scholar* \_\_\_\_\_ *Age* \_\_\_\_\_

*Number of Sabbaths present,* . . . .

*Tickets gained for Bible Lesson,* . . . .

„ *Psalm,* . . . .

„ *Text,* . . . .

„ *Catechism,* . . . .

„ *Written Scripture Exercises,* \_\_\_\_\_

*Total number of tickets,*

*Conduct (of Scholar)* . . . .

*Teacher* \_\_\_\_\_

*Superintendent* \_\_\_\_\_

*Date* \_\_\_\_\_

As it would take a great number of tickets to serve an ordinary Sabbath-school for a year, it is convenient to have tickets of “exchange”—that is, tickets of a

higher value, and of a different colour, with the names of the respective subjects and value printed on them,

thus—

|                |
|----------------|
| PSALM.<br>TEN. |
|----------------|

When the scholars have got ten

small tickets for any subject, they bring back the small tickets and give them in exchange for one of the higher value.

A Sabbath-school of 100 scholars would, it will be seen, require 1000 tickets of each subject to start with, and a corresponding number of tens, or 100 tens of each kind. These tickets can be had at any printer's for a mere trifle, about 4s. 6d. per 1000.

Beautiful certificates, 7 in. by 9 in., on stiff card-board, with the engraving of the church or Sabbath-school, and ornamented edges, can be procured at the rate of £4, 4s. per thousand, or about one penny each, provided there be a plate of the church in existence; if not, and if the plate has to be made, it will be something extra. The same certificates may be had on paper for rather more than half that cost.

#### ADVANTAGES OF THIS SCHEME.

Of the advantages of this scheme there can be no doubt. They are both numerous and various. When a child has to wait and look forward for a whole year for a reward for his industry, it is too long a stretch for him to keep up his interest in his work, and his attention is apt to flag; but the daily expectation of carrying off a ticket for each of his lessons, acts as a charm in the preparation of his lessons. When he knows that every lesson properly repeated, read, or answered, as the case may be, will give an immediate reward for his pains—when he can look forward every



Sabbath to the possibility of carrying home such evidence of his diligence and success,—it gives him a new interest every week, and infuses into his work a stimulus and an energy he has never known before. When he has the prospect of getting a *Ten ticket* for that number of small ones, he anxiously works on for this other distinction, for as such he regards it. Not only so, but as the certificate he is to receive is to contain an account of all the tickets gained, of his attendance at school, and of his conduct there, it has the effect of encouraging him in his whole Sabbath-school life and work to do and to be what his teachers wish. And it serves the threefold purpose of being,—*firstly*, an authentic record of actual work done during the year; *secondly*, as a prize in itself, and is much more valued both by the scholar and by the home circle than the small book generally given as a Sabbath-school prize; and *thirdly*, it is a certificate of character and ability that may be kept and be useful in future years.

There is thus created a manifold benefit. It stirs up the scholar to new energy; it enlists the interest of the home circle; it insures good behaviour in the Sabbath-school, the penalty of misdemeanour being the forfeiture of all tickets gained for the day; it makes the Sabbath-school orderly, quiet, and interesting, and altogether a different place from what it used to be; and it is the emphatic testimony of every Sabbath-school teacher who has adopted it, that teaching under this system is a pleasure, whereas before it was little short of drudgery.

#### TO MAKE THE SABBATH-SCHOOL SELF-SUPPORTING.

There is nothing that cripples the working of a Sabbath-school so much as the want of funds to meet

the current expenses necessary to keep the whole machinery going. The shifts to which some ministers, superintendents, and teachers are put to get funds for this purpose are amusing; but they have a sorrowful side as well. It is amusing to see the grave faces of a meeting of Sabbath-school teachers sitting in solemn conclave over the few shillings they have been able to scrape together from "the collection in aid of the Sabbath-school," trying to see how it is possible to make all the children happy from the sum so magnanimously contributed by the liberal hands and hearts of the Christian parents of the children whom they are endeavouring to instruct in the sacred things of eternity, and train in the way they should go. This dole, which is looked upon as an extra tax or *another collection*, is a bugbear in the way, and is far from being pleasant to either teachers or others, and has led us to adopt a much better plan, and one that meets all requirements, without the heartburnings that other systems cause—a plan so simple and effective that it only requires to be stated in order to be approved, and if adopted, will be certain to produce the happiest results.

Get a number of tin boxes, sufficient to give one to each class in the Sabbath-school. Boxes similar to those in which coffee is sold, having a slit in the top large enough to admit a copper, can be had from any tinsmith for a penny each. Let these boxes be handed round the school every Sunday, each class having its own box, marked I., II., III., &c., or with the teacher's name upon them, so that they can be easily distinguished. They can be kept in some press during the week; or if it be thought better, they can be kept by the teachers. By this daily collection, it will be found at the end of the year that the contributions amount to from £5 to £10 per 100 scholars.

This sum will be found sufficient to meet all necessary current expenses, supply a considerable number of books for the Sabbath-school library, and leave a good margin for mission purposes besides. This saves all the annoyance that is felt in connection with collections from the congregation, and the anxiety about funds to carry out the system of Sabbath-school teaching with anything like comfort. It gives a tone of healthy rivalry to the school, and will be found a great convenience as well as a great blessing to all.

#### ACCOMMODATION.

Another crying evil in our Sabbath-school system is want of accommodation for carrying on the work. Generally the church is converted into a Sabbath-school for the time being; and a most unsuitable place it is for class-teaching. There is an absurd idea among some, that because it is the place where the children and the parents worship, therefore it is the place that is most *becoming* to use as the Sabbath-school. If the children were required to sit as people do in church, not in classes, but as is most convenient for themselves, the idea might be entertained; but the fact that classes are an absolute necessity in any school, at once disposes of this false notion. Everybody that has ever taught in a Sabbath-school knows how ill adapted the pews of a church are for carrying on successfully the work of class-teaching. While the teacher is busy with the scholars at one end of the seat, those at the other end must be to some extent neglected; and the temptation is strong to the young mind in such circumstances to go off to something else than the work in hand,—and *thus* much of the teacher's labour is lost, and the re-

sults are far less satisfactory than might be expected with better accommodation for this work. But what can churches do in such a case? It is not to be expected that every church and congregation can afford to have a school built for this express purpose, which would be used only for one hour once a-week; and generally speaking, the halls attached to the churches are too small for this purpose. How shall we find a remedy for this defect? We see no difficulty in overcoming this defect, and it is strange that it has not been acted upon before. Instead of keeping the Sabbath-school in our churches, why not throw open the public schools for the purpose of giving religious instruction on Sabbath days, and the whole defect would be remedied at one stroke. If it were found that there was not a school for every congregation, then it would be an easy matter so to arrange that some Sabbath-schools could meet at different hours; and thus we should see our Sabbath-schools put on a proper footing, so far as accommodation is concerned.

But what a much simpler process would it be still, if, instead of having so many Sabbath-schools, the children were just to attend for an hour on Sunday the school they are in the habit of attending during the week, for the purpose of getting religious instruction, and nothing else! How much trouble and annoyance would be saved! The children would naturally fall into the standards taught in the school every day, and the lessons of necessity be made suitable to the standards. And if the teacher of the school would take the trouble to superintend, we venture to think that the school would be much more effectual, both as regards the amount of work done, the discipline preserved, and real good accomplished.

## CHAPTER IV.

## CONGREGATIONS—SABBATH-SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS.

THE greatest of all difficulties that our Sabbath-schools have to contend with is the want of Sabbath-school teachers. It is the constant cry in every Sabbath-school that there are too few on the teaching staff for the number of scholars on the roll. As Sabbath-schools have hitherto been conducted, we need not wonder at that fact. There has been little inducement to try to impart instruction to children who took no interest in the work, who were careless, uncourteous, unpunctual, and ill prepared. It is the more, therefore, to the credit of those who have come forward, notwithstanding all these drawbacks, to give their generous aid in this noble work. When congregations begin to consider that the Sabbath-school teachers are their representatives as to the teaching power in the Church, and to realise the fact that the better the teaching power, just the stronger the Church and the better the tone thereof, we may expect many who might come forward to this work and do not to look at the question fairly, and to recognise their duty to the Church, to the children, and to Christ; and surely we may look for a great accession of strength, and knowledge, and grace, and consequently of success, to our Sabbath-schools.

Congregations seem not to think that they owe anything to the teachers of their Sabbath-schools, while in reality they owe them much more than they are aware of. Where would be the Church if the children were not trained in the knowledge of God's Word? What would become of the lambs of the flock? Very likely straying away into pastures ill fitted to bring out their best parts, but calculated to ruin their souls. Not only do the congregations owe the teachers a debt of gratitude for the benefits they confer on the children, but they owe it to them, as well as to the children and to themselves, to give all the aid that lies in their power in the preparation of lessons, in seeing that the children attend the Sunday-school regularly and punctually, and in seeing what progress is being made in the work in which every Christian man and woman is morally bound to sympathise.

The self-denying labour of the Sunday-school teacher is beyond all praise. It is a work of pure love: giving freely what they have freely received; getting no return for their labour but the consciousness of using their best endeavours to help in the work of bringing up the children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and the happiness of seeing the young prospering in the knowledge of the highest truths that man can name. It might serve also to encourage the teacher if he were to consider that through his self-denying labour he may indirectly be the means of awaking parents to a sense of their duty, and that he is sowing the seed which may redound to the glory of God and the welfare of children of generations yet unborn. You who devote your energies to this good work will gather inspiration from these words of Goldsmith—

“The angel-choir His praise may chant in rapturous songs above,  
And through the universe His power adoringly proclaim ;

But they can never win for Christ a child's first ardent love,  
Nor whisper in the infant's ear the Saviour's precious name.  
O happy teacher! to whose trust this glorious work is given—  
A work unshared by those who dwell amid the joys of heaven.

'Feed my lambs!' in all its sweet persuasiveness to-day,—  
This message from the Saviour's lips, O Christian, reaches  
thee!  
Ask not, 'And what shall others do?' but help without delay  
To train the children of your class in peace and purity.  
And though, perchance, thou mayst not call earth's fading laurel  
thine,  
Yet, bright as stars that gem night's brows, thou shalt for ever  
shine."

However many discouragements you may meet with—and there are many—keep your high aim with a true and earnest heart. It is no small matter to have the training of the early fruits for Christ's vineyard in your hands,—to make impressions on hearts that are young and tender—impressions that may last to all eternity, and that in future may shine to your glory in being the jewels of the Redeemer. "Be not weary in well-doing." "In due time ye will reap, if ye faint not." Yours is work that angels cannot do, and it is worthy of the ambition of any Christian, and far more worthy than many a path by which they seek to walk who try to honour their God and Saviour in treading in the high courts of learning.

Your work ranks—and that deservedly—among the foremost of our day, and you yourselves are in the ranks of the philanthropists of the age in which we live. Although you cannot all be David Blairs, Robert Raikeses, or John Howards, yet you can, and you do, fill an honourable place in the field of the great Master. Your earnest endeavours to train the youthful mind, to instil true principles into it, to open up to it the

fountain of holiness and blessedness, to make the young fit for the duties they in the ordinary run of affairs will be called upon to perform, to make them useful and loyal subjects, faithful and upright citizens, pure and true Christians,—these exertions will surely have the blessing of God, however little you yourselves may count upon your services. Yours is the field in which perhaps the greatest triumphs are won—triumphs, it may be, unseen to you or to any who look on—triumphs that may never be known in time or in the annals of time,—but triumphs that will bear fruit after you have passed away from the scene of your labours, and which are recorded in that Book on high which is in the hands of the faithful and true Witness, and which will be kept until the great day when all shall be declared before the assembled multitude, and when you may be surprised at the abundant harvest of golden sheaves that are gathered in from the seed you once sowed. Can any one think this to be degrading work? Can any one deny that it is elevating work?

“ To seek those lambs and lead them back ;  
To find each sin-marred gem ;  
To guide them to the heavenly track,  
Fit for Christ's diadem ;

To tune those infant tongues to sing  
Redemption's song in heaven ;—  
This is the work our loving King  
To us on earth hath given,”—

as Mary Howitt says, who seems to have known what was the life and the light of men, and to have entered into the spirit in which a child thirsting for knowledge might be expected to be found, when they are represented as saying—



“ Give us light amid our darkness,  
Let us know the good from ill,  
Hate us not for all our blindness,  
Love us, lead us, show us kindness—  
You can make us what you will.

We are willing, we are ready ;  
We would learn if you would teach ;  
We have hearts that yearn toward duty  
We have minds alive to beauty,  
Souls that any light can reach.

Raise us by your Christian knowledge ;  
Consecrate to man our powers ;  
Let us take our proper station,  
We the rising congregation,—  
Let us stamp the age as ours.

We shall be what you shall make us—  
Make us wise and make us good ;  
Make us strong for time of trial ;  
Teach us temperance, self-denial,  
Patience, kindness, fortitude.”

When Sabbath-school teachers see what is asked of them, they will be careful never to neglect systematic and sedulous preparation. This is as necessary on the part of the teacher as the air and the food to keep up bodily life. A teacher who allows the oil in his lamp to burn down will fail in imparting light to others. He must replenish his lamp and whet his sickle, or else there will be a want of fuel to keep the fire up : he will find a languor creep over his class ; his work will be dry and sapless and superficial ; and the Sabbath-school will fail to be the inspiring thing that *that* teacher finds it who puts his heart into it, and strives how well he will put the lessons before the children, in order that he may interest as well as

instruct them. A teacher who habitually does this will find that there is a benefit and a blessing in his work even for himself. He will be astonished at the number of incidents in the Bible that take quite a new and a living shape before him,—he will see deeper and clearer into things that before he may have met and passed over with only a momentary notice. His own character will become more in accordance with the work in which he is engaged; for he knows that the children watch him, and he strives to give them a good example—and this induces him to watch over himself: and thus he will grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ; he will become naturally imbued with the Spirit of his Master,—his nature, his temper, his character will improve, “till every precious stone in the diadem of Christian graces be set in its place, and burnished and made fit for Christ’s sake, to be added to those which evermore shall burn and blaze around the throne, and shall brighten in the pure and holy splendours of the glory of God and the Lamb,—shining as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars, for ever and ever.”

The children are a trust committed to the charge of the Church. What they become under that charge, such will the Church of the future become, and such will the world become. Let congregations consider this well. Let them not leave all this work in the hands of one man, their minister, who likely has his hands full of necessary work already, and finds all his energies crippled for want of help and encouragement in this most urgent work. Let them remember the words of Him who loved the children so well: “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.”

Take these words home, that the generations to follow may be better than the generations that are gone have been,—not content with equalling their fathers, but every child excelling his father in what is good, useful, noble, and pure ; that the pillars be more comely, more beautiful, more chaste, and that every rising prop may become an ornament to his Saviour—

“ When He cometh, when He cometh  
To make up His jewels,—  
All His jewels—precious jewels,—  
His loved and His own,  
Like the stars of the morning,  
His bright crown adorning,  
They shall shine in their beauty,  
Bright gems for His crown.”

Much has been done for the elevation and education of the children since the days of David Blair and Robert Raikes, and other noble pioneers in this field, but there remains much yet to be done ; and it is for congregations individually and collectively to reflect on these facts, and offer their aid and their sympathy to ministers, and missionaries, and teachers, and philanthropists, in order that the good work may receive a new impetus, which it appears to require. There are furrowed fields lying around us ready for the seed to be thrown in,—hearts yearning for spirit-seed, and the seed-time is passing, passing away.

“ Listen, the Master beseecheth,  
Calling each one by his name ;  
His voice to each loving heart reacheth,  
His cheerfullest service to claim.  
Go when the vineyard demandeth  
Vine-dressers' nurture and care ;  
Or go when the white harvest standeth,  
The joy of the reaper to share.”

A country's greatness does not depend on either her army or her navy, nor is it to be reckoned by the number of swords, rifles, guns, or ships she can command, nor yet on her climate or her soil ; but a nation's strength and glory, her bulwark and her safe defence, lies in fearing God. "*Blessed* is that nation whose God is the Lord." A French minister of instruction writes : "We have abundant proof that the wellbeing either of the individual or the people is nowise secured by a merely very refined civilisation. The true happiness of both is founded on strict morality, and on the willing performance of duties to God. A religious and moral education is consequently the first want of a people."

Let our youth be taught, above all things, to "Fear God and keep His commandments," and then we may hope for great things for them and for our native land, and, above all, for the Church of our blessed Lord and Saviour.

Let the Sabbath-school teachers not be discouraged although there may be occasional rough places in the way, and steepes to climb, and perhaps also sloughs of despond to go through. Take courage from the example of those in whose footsteps you walk, and strive to emulate them in your good work ; as Horatius Bonar says so beautifully—

" Work, for the time is flying ;  
Work, with hearts sincere ;  
Work, for souls are dying ;  
Work, for night is near.  
In the Master's vineyard  
Go and work to-day,  
Be no useless sluggard  
Standing in the way.

In this glorious calling  
Work till day is o'er ;

Work till, evening falling,  
You can work no more.  
Then your labour bringing  
To the King of kings,  
Borne with joy and singing  
Home on angels' wings.

There where saints adore Him,  
Where the ransomed meet,  
Lay thy sheaves before Him,  
Lay them at His feet.  
Hear thy Master saying  
From His heavenly throne,  
When thy wages paying,  
'Labourer, well done!'

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